

**The Lack of Diversity in Leadership  
Positions  
In  
NCAA Collegiate Sports**

**Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Democratic Staff**

**Nolan Richardson, Jr.  
Former Head Men's Basketball Coach  
University of Arkansas  
(1985 – 2002)**

**February 28, 2007**

### **Opening Statement for Nolan Richardson Jr.**

It has always been my burden to prove that I suffered at the hands of discrimination while working at the University of Arkansas as the Men's Head Basketball Coach. I believed that my cries for equality fell on deaf ears. My immediate superior did not care about what I had to say about my treatment, since he was the offender. This did not stop me from continuing to point out the overt discrimination I had to endure.

I did not receive the great contracts with enormous bonuses that other coaches received even though I was out performing them in my duties, especially the football program. Even though I served as Associate Athletic Director, I was never informed of any meetings and I was not ever given any duties. As I inquired about the meetings and my duties, it seemed like a tremendous amount of effort was made to not include me and I was often stone walled. It became quite evident to me that I was experiencing "Tokenism."

As a basketball coach, my job performance was measured by victories, losses and results; by how many NCAA Tournament appearances my team made. I was measured by how many season tickets were sold. I was measured by how much money the basketball program made for the school. After 17 years of service, winning the 1994 NCAA Tournament title, going back to the NCAA Championship Tournament the following year (1995) and finishing as one of the top two teams in the Nation as a runner-up, consecutive NCAA appearances, NIT appearances and numerous conference championships. During my tenure my program was synonymous with winning and countless other successes. I was

one of the top coaches in the country, with one of the highest career winning percentages. I had a proven record but I could never prove myself.

After being fired (2002), I wasn't even allowed to coach the last game of the season. I felt for all the discrimination I had endured I needed to continue my fight for equality. That is when I decided to file a lawsuit against the University, the Board of Trustees, and the Razorback Foundation for racial discrimination.

## **Summary of Major Points for Nolan Richardson, Jr.**

### **Racial and Gender Underutilization**

Under representation of Minorities (African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans) and Females in leadership positions in college athletics is minimal to say the least. Leadership positions from the top of the departments down to the bottom should be a diverse collection of leaders. I feel that the only way this is ever going to happen is that the current leaders need to be open-minded and fair. Another reason minorities are locked out of key positions is because those in power often have their own network or pool of colleagues that they give these opportunities to. This is not only happening with NCAA Division I schools but also in Division II and III schools.

### **I. Experiences at the University of Arkansas**

- African American Girls on the University of Arkansas Women's basketball team often sought my help and support because they felt they had no one to turn to. They felt they were discriminated against. The Women's Basketball Coaching Staff was white and the African American Coach they had, felt as if she was powerless and had no voice. No one would listen to the African-American girls. I had to intervene on their behalf and go talk to their coach about their concerns.
- White football coaching staff asked for my help with the African-American student-athletes they were recruiting. They found it difficult to relate to African-Americans.

- Immediately after being hired, Athletic Director Frank Broyles suggested that I call University of Indiana Head Men's Basketball Coach, Bobby Knight, so that Coach Knight could teach me about defense.
- When Houston Nutt was hired, he was given bonuses and incentives that took me almost 17 years to get.
- I was targeted for graduation rates, where other schools that had records that were seriously low were not targeted because the head coaches were not African Americans.

## **II. Tokenism**

- I served as Associate Athletic Director from 1990-2000.
- I was not included in any decision-making.
- I was not assigned any duties.
- The Media is heavily responsible for stereotyping African-Americans in athletics. The Media contributed immensely to my dismissal.

## **III. Hiring Practices**

- Unstable Hiring Increases, which lead to decreases in the numbers.
- Minorities are not able to secure positions for long periods of time like their white counterparts.
- Losses are less tolerated from African-Americans, while whites are often given numerous chances and time to produce a winning team.
- Tyrone Willingham (African-American) was replaced by Charlie Weis (White Man) Notre Dame is an example of the different treatment.
- African Americans are relegated to Assistant coach positions.

- With this increase of Assistant Coaches, bottlenecking is at a serious all time high.
- Very few assistant coaches if any are able to obtain head coaching position.
- Slow Hiring
- Reluctance to hire African Americans has resulted in a slow growth rate.
- Rarely do minorities get hired at other colleges after their dismissals, unlike their white counterparts. Whites have the luxury and the flexibility to move from one top school to another, while African –Americans often fade into obscurity.
- Disparagement of the numbers of positions held by whites versus the number held by African-Americans.
- African-American Coaches are singled out as “great recruiters” but are given no credit for any other skills or attributes, let alone being labeled as a ‘great coach.’

### **III. Salaries and Bonuses**

- Disparity in salaries and bonuses
- Unfair assessment of job performance.
- Head Football Coach Houston Nutt (University of Arkansas)
- African Americans are seemingly judged collectively instead of individually

### **V. Where do the Boosters and Alumni figure into the hiring equation?**

- The hiring power does not rest solely on the administration.
- Boosters and Alumni Associations weigh in heavily on hiring and firing decisions.

## **VI. Lack of representation**

- Football
- Athletic Directors
- African –American females as women's basketball head coaching position.

## **Pride and prejudice. (Arkansas Razorbacks' basketball coach Nolan Richardson; includes related article)(Special Section: The NCAA Tournament)**

*SportingNews*

**From: The Sporting News | Date: 3/20/1995 | Author: Hille, Bob**

Nolan Richardson, the highly-regarded coach of the NCAA's reigning national champion men's basketball team, is one of a handful of African Americans to achieve prominence in a management role in sports. Richardson came of age in the segregated South, and the experience strengthened him.

The nine children, Banked by soldiers draped in olive drab, looked younger, smaller than they really were as they were escorted into monolithic Little Rock Central High School. It was fall 1957, and progress came in small steps taken by small feet in Arkansas. It had been five years since Edith Mae Irby became the first Negro to graduate from the University of Arkansas Medical School, but it would be almost 30 years before a black man would get the opportunity to coach basketball in Fayetteville and nine years more before a lineup dominated by African Americans would win Arkansas' first NCAA basketball championship.

It was 1957, and there was a citywide curfew in El Paso, Tex., but Nolan Richardson had to be home much earlier than any curfew. His grandmother, Rose, saw in him great things -- "You're special," she told him, "You're going to be places." -- and she was trying to protect him from a neighborhood that came by its name honestly: El Pujido, Mexican slang for "tough and rugged."

A four-sport star in high school, one outstanding season melting into the next, 15-year-old Nolan was always coming home from one practice or another. And each day as he rounded the corner onto Overland Street, he saw what one day would be one of his precious memories. There, at the shotgun house at 1626, was Ol' Mama, rocking, waiting, just as she had been waiting and watching out for the 11 years since Nolan and his two sisters came t Paso when their mother died (Nolan's daddy, who'd never been around much, had died when he was 12). Ol' Mama was equal parts father, mother, provider and front-porch philosopher.

It was 1957, and the Bowie High School baseball team had won a place in districts, but Nolan, the only Negro on the team and the best player, would not be allowed to stay with his teammates on the road. The mists of 38 years can't swallow the hurt Nolan Richardson felt in 1957, when Coach Herrera pulled him aside and told him he would not be staying at the team motel, that he would not be swimming and eating chicken-fried steaks. Richardson, tugging at the immaculate, starched white collar of his expensive shirt, remembers his reaction as if he were sitting with Ol' Mama right now on that porch of that shotgun house at 1626 Overland: To hell with them, I just won't go. He also remembers Ol' Mama's response as she quietly rocked: "Lemme tell you something. You're going, and you're going to stay across the tracks with the little black lady they told me you were going to stay with. Let your bat do the talking. You pitch, and if you pitch, let your arm do the talking. And then, one of these days, some things are going to change and you're going to have opportunities you never would've had. But if you don't go, if

you don't go and let your bat do the talking, they may keep that kind of stuff going on forever, for your kids."

Richardson, a man of considerable ego as well as pride, would like to be able to tell me he listened intently to his grandmother, in her reasoning saw enlightenment and swallowed that pride. In reality, 15-year-olds are 15-year-olds. "My kids? I don't care about my kids. I ain't got no kids, Ol' Mama." But to districts he went; and, in Richardson's words, he went "berserk" once there. When he returned to El Pujido, Ol' Mama gave him a knowing lecture, a talkin' to that Richardson recalls and has not only lived but also carried with him and delivered more than a time or two:

"You gotta keep going berserk. That's the only way you're going to make it, either with your bat or with the ball, which means that if you're good enough, you're going to get your scholarship and you can keep going. If you're good enough in the classroom and get enough education behind you, you keep fighting. Eventually, somebody's going to open the door. You just keep knocking. It'll open. And when it do, you knock that damn door down."

Richardson, 53, has been splintering thresholds for 38 years by sheer determination and, as fate would have it, because of the color of his skin. He was the first black at Bowie High and in 1965 returned as its first black coach; he was one of the first black basketball players at Texas Western (now Texas-El Paso); he was the first black coach at Western Texas Junior College (where he went 37-0 and won the national junior college championship in 1980) and then the first black coach at the University of Tulsa.

By any yardstick, he is at the top of his profession. He is coach of a team that this week will begin defense of the only national championship in 72 seasons of Arkansas basketball. But clearly he isn't satisfied; he can't be satisfied. He is a complicated man, on the one hand scarred by his past and on the other tempered by it. Perhaps that is why he always seems to be saying he doesn't give a damn about what you think of him, yet always finds time to defend himself against criticism or perceived slights. There is always another challenge, real or imagined, and to conquer each, Richardson calls upon his grandmother's wisdom.

"I never will forget it," he says. There is a softness in his voice now as we sit in the concrete catacombs of Bud Walton Arena and he takes me back to El Paso in 1957, passing along advice Ol' Mama gave him the year I was born. "'Just tell them, you let them crack it,'" he says, squinting and holding the thumb and forefinger on his right hand a quarter-inch apart. "That's all you need. You don't want them to open it just leave a crack.' And that's been in the back of my mind all the time. So when I think about some of these guys out here who don't want me to be successful, I think about that crack. Just leave me a crack; I'll get it."

Arkansas is a beautiful, ugly, enlightened, ignorant, fabulously wealthy, painfully impoverished state. It is a state that gave us William Fulbright, one of the first U.S. senators to speak out against the Vietnam War and one of the last to vote in favor of civil rights. It is a state that counts among its residents one of the richest families in America and people so poor that its per-capita income annually ranks near the bottom in the United States.

Arkansas is a state in which Nolan Richardson fits perfectly -- and not at all.

"He broke a significant racial barrier here," friend Sam Yalowitz, a Brooklyn-born professor of special education at Arkansas, told the Washington Post. "This is still a traditional Southern state. A lot of people still call blacks 'niggers' and think they should be happy with what they have."

When he arrived from Tulsa in 1986, what Richardson had was a walk-it-up team that would go 12-16 in a first season of pounding square pegs into round holes and, my, how many holes Eddie Sutton did leave when he went to Kentucky. Arkansans accustomed to basketball at 331/3 couldn't get used to the game at 78 rpm.

(True story: In that first season, Richardson's wife, Rose, was shopping at a Fayetteville department store when she overheard another customer telling a sales clerk that her husband had been thinking of selling his tickets "ever since they hired that black coach." With her checkbook open, Rose approached the woman: "Ill buy your tickets.")

Within three seasons in Fayetteville, Richardson would know great personal depths -- his daughter, Yvonne, the beautiful one who called him Papito, would die of leukemia at age 15 in 1987 -- and the first uptick of tremendous professional heights there, as the Razorbacks would put together a 21-9 record in 1988 and earn an NCAA Tournament berth.

By 1989, things were fitting together. Recruiting had gone well, and the Hogs were about to embark on a three-season stretch in which they would record 89 victories and 16 losses.

Victories and losses. Results. That's what it's all about, right? If we could all just look past the surface, celebrate our differences, not make judgments because of them. Black, white, brown. Green, for God's sake. What's the big deal?

John Thompson, realist, idealist and Georgetown basketball coach, is on the phone, and he is quietly, patiently trying to explain this thing that divides our country: "We do live in a society of colors, and unfortunately that comes to bear for all of us. I think we'd be unrealistic if we didn't think it did, whether you're a black coach or a black doctor."

So no matter how many victories Nolan Richardson finishes with -- he enters tournament play with 364 and, he points out, is third on the list of active coaches in terms of career winning percentage -- he will be judged differently than, say, Kentucky's Rick Pitino or Duke's Mike Krzyzewski.

"The game is defined differently for a black coach," Thompson says. "And, truthfully, it's hard to explain to a white person. It's like Nolan has talked about his daughter and says he's had people say to him, 'I know how you feel.' And that really upsets him, because there's no way they could possibly know how it feels.

"There's no such thing as the game for the sake of the game. It's not a luxury but a necessity; it's a means to an end, its a means to an end for a lot of people. And Nolan understands that."

The epiphany came as Richardson watched Thompson walk out before a Georgetown game in 1989 in protest over NCAA eligibility requirements that Thompson argued were

unfair to black athletes. Recalling watching Thompson walk out, Richardson would say: "I felt so bad. I didn't know what to do."

Richardson ached because he knew that there had been no one there to stand up for him almost 30 years earlier when Texas Western was about to play in a tournament in Shreveport, La. Richardson, a sophomore and the team's leading scorer, was told he would be left behind in El Paso because Centenary, the host school, didn't allow blacks to play on its court. "I felt" Richardson says, again holding his fingers a quarter-inch apart, "about that big."

He was left behind to listen to the games on the radio. "I'd say, 'C'mon, man, c'mon. Oh, man, c'mon,'" Richardson says, leaning into an imaginary radio as he recalls his solitary confinement. When the Miners fell behind, as they inevitably would without their best player, Richardson would turn off the radio. Three games, three losses, three opportunities lost never to be recovered by Nolan Richardson, the player.

So when the NCAA talks about tighter eligibility and standardized test scores as part of eligibility requirements, that's when Richardson, who with Thompson is a cornerstone member of the Black Coaches Association, has to speak up for those who can't.

"When I speak in terms of opportunity, I really mean poor people because I think those are the people who are really getting -- excuse my French -- screwed because the school systems don't have the best schools for the poor folks. I stand for that maybe because of my background and where I came from and how hard it was and what I've seen and how many times I was said no to because of the color of my skin," Richardson says, the passion adding inflection to his words. "I'm very fortunate, I'm very lucky and I'm very appreciative. I think the good Lord really blessed me for having the opportunity. See, I don't think I would've been here if I had to pass the SAT back then."

Opportunity, that's what this is all about to Richardson, whose math, frankly, doesn't jibe with the NCAA and the idea of publishing graduation rates. Because, Richardson says, if you, as a coach, have brought 500 kids to your college and graduated all 500, and he has brought 1,000 to his college and graduated 500, he has done a better job than you because he gave more opportunities. Richardson, playing both parts, lapses into a conversation between himself and an Imaginary College Administrator to illustrate the frustration his math can bring about:

Richardson: So let's make the kids ineligible (if they don't meet entrance requirements).

Imaginary College Administrator: OK ... well ... that's going to cost us.

N.R.: What's more important, the kid or the money? Let's just spend more money and give more -- opportunity.

ICA: Well, we've got women's programs to ...

N.R.: Well, so what? Give them some, too.

"See? I just don't understand then what \$1.7 billion from CBS is going to do for you. That's a lot of dollars. When I (retire), I'm going to ask them, 'Show me. Show me where all that's going. Show me.'"

On an unseasonably warm spring evening, I approach Bud Walton Arena, a two-year-old state-of-the-art coliseum that is a monument to Arkansas' recent basketball success and makes the football stadium two blocks north on Razorback Drive look downright quaint if not antiquated. A man in his 30s approaches and asks the question that makes scalpers' and athletic directors' hearts flutter: "Got any tickets?"

On this night, there isn't a ticket to be bought as the Razorbacks look like the running, pressing defending national champions in flicking Louisiana State out of their way before a national-TV audience. In the preceding five days, Arkansas has defeated Kentucky, and Richardson has defended himself against the expletives in the media who continue to attack him.

Two hours after his team's victory over LSU and two days after it has dispatched eventual SEC champion Kentucky, Richardson knows there are still those who doubt his coaching acumen, and he recounts a conversation with Pitino with obvious relish: "We're good friends, and I said, 'Rick, you just run, gun, shoot 3s and everybody thinks you're one hell of a coach.' I said, 'If I did that -- which I do -- they call mine ratball or niggerball,'" Richardson says, the words rushing faster as he bends forward, his broad shoulders straining the seams of his black double-breasted suit. " 'But when you do it, it's called up-tempo, up-tempo and shoot the 3. They give it a beautiful name, and they glorify you.' He just shook his head and said, 'Nolan, you're right.'"

"There are some good, beautiful, wonderful people in Arkansas. There's a few who are always going to stick . . ." Richardson stops short. "They don't want me to be successful so they'll do anything they can or say some of the things that are going to affect that."

Richardson's most vocal critic is John R. Starr, an op-ed columnist with the state's largest newspaper, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, in Little Rock. On the eve of the Razorbacks' national-championship run last season, Starr took Richardson to task for losing an SEC Tournament game to Pitino and Kentucky. For three consecutive days, Starr wrote about Richardson. His most unrelenting attack coming March 15, when, as the Razorbacks prepared for the NCAA Tournament, Richardson went to Chicago for a BCA meeting to discuss whether to boycott the tournament because of the NCAA's proposed tightening of admissions standards for athletes:

"If the players play, their chances of winning the tournament are considerably enhanced if Richardson, one of the poorest bench coaches in the land, is back in Fayetteville sulking in his tent."

Richardson coached, and the Razorbacks advanced to the Final Four in Charlotte, where they defeated Arizona in the semifinals, setting up a championship against Duke and putting Richardson in the position of spelling things out in black and white in the inevitable comparisons of Duke and Arkansas, himself and Krzyzewski.

Richardson had seen it before. "We went 37-0 in junior college, and I remember at the barber shop a guy was saying, 'I wonder what Dean Smith would do with a team like that.' 'Hoss, we didn't lose a game. What could he have done?'" Richardson says, his voice rising in incredulity.

"The respect I was thinking about (in Charlotte) was the fact that I know I've been coaching all these years and winning, and if I would win games and some of the other

black coaches would win, we could never win because of our brains and our techniques and our teachings. We could never win that way; it was always because, 'Well, they've got the best athletes' and 'Man, look at those athletes that guy got out there.' Wait a minute, I said, look at my team and look at Krzyzewski's team and put us on paper and just ask the people out here how many they want of their All-Americans as opposed to us -- they don't know us, they don't know anything about us -- and see whose team they're going to pick, whose players they're going to pick. That was the thing that used to bother me more than anything."

His mentor from UTEP, Coach Don Haskins, looked on from Richardson's hometown as he lectured the assembled media. "I didn't think he needed to do that. He came out a loser," Haskins says. "He kicked Arizona's ass, and he should've left it at that."

But Richardson wouldn't; he couldn't.

"Nolan can never compete as 100-percent coach," Thompson says. "He has other responsibilities as a black man. I hear people say they're in it for the love of the game. He can't go in feeling that way; no black man can. And I think that's a lot of what you heard from Nolan at last year's Final Four."

Wednesday night in Fayetteville and the topic of conversation at Herman's, a landmark barbecue joint in a house that looks to be held together by smoke, is ... investments?

In a dimly lit room where the only thing thicker than the sauce is the accents, there isn't a discernible word about the Hogs (although there is a lot of red being worn).

It has been that kind of season.

The night before, in the wee hours, Richardson sipped a Diet Coke and talked at length about the pressure his team has faced this season, about the injuries and other sundry problems it has overcome. With all five starters back from the national-championship team, the expectations have been high. "When you are the h-h-hunted," Richardson says, stumbling on the word as if it pains him, "it's a little different than when you were on that mission and you know you had something to prove."

There is, then, the potential that Richardson will have done a better job of coaching this season when history says the Razorbacks probably won't repeat as champions. And even after winning the championship, Richardson received a small percentage of letters that included racial slurs from Arkansans more intent on his not succeeding than the team's succeeding for no other reason than Nolan Richardson's pockmarked skin is the color of chocolate. Repeat or not, Richardson will keep coaching four or five more years and then retire, probably to his land in northwest Arkansas.

"You create a monster, you've got to feed it. I know that I've created a monster," says Richardson, leaning back and surveying the ceiling. Then he spreads his arms and looks around. "Look at this building. You think they would have a building like this if we weren't exciting? Nooo way, Jose. .. But this ain't my building because I'll leave here and somebody else is going to have it. The point is this: I know why they built it."

Melba Patillo Beals, 53, lives in Marin County, Calif. Thirty-eight years ago this fall, she and eight other students integrated Little Rock Central High School, which was just plain Little Rock High School when my father went there in the late 1930s.

Of her experience she writes: "I was a child who rode in the back of the bus, who drank from a fountain marked 'colored,' who was not allowed in the movie theater. My life today is better."

RELATED ARTICLE: Crunch time

Arkansas has struggled all season with the twin-edged sword of huge expectations rarely met and enormous potential unfulfilled. The Hogs have been labeled everything from overrated to uninterested.

Yet they are the defending national champions, have all five starters back, including the Final Four MVP. Only two rotation regulars -- Roger Crawford and Ken Biley -- were lost.

OK, Nolan Richardson, it's NCAA Tournament time. What can your first round opponent expect this week in the first round?

"We're back to playing Nolan's kind of ball," he says. "I like that."

The gap between good and great in college basketball can be traversed in a blink; the difference between a pass stolen and one that goes for a breakaway layup can be imperceptible.

There have been stretches in which the Razorbacks have been brilliant. A 94-92 victory against eventual Southeastern Conference champion Kentucky on Super Bowl Sunday was worthy of the Final Four. And there have been times when they've been abysmal, blown away at Auburn and buried at home by Alabama.

Arkansas enters the tournament more than former than the latter.

"We are all stepping up at the right time," says Corliss Williamson, the Final Four MVP. "It's March now, which means it's crunch time. Everyone needs to play well."

Only within the past three weeks has Arkansas displayed any sort of consistency or inspired any kind of confidence among fans, despite winning streaks of 11 and eight games during a 25-5 regular season. Explanations have ranged from excess weight (Williamson and Darnell Robinson) early on to injuries (Davor Rimac and Dwight Stewart) through the middle of the schedule to egos and chemistry throughout the season.

But the Razorbacks say other teams are making a mistake if they think Arkansas is blase about trying to repeat.

"I hope they count us out," says junior guard Scotty Thurman, who then perhaps unwittingly gives a glimpse of the strain the Razorbacks have played under this season. "Maybe it would put the pressure on someone else, and we'll see how they play under the spotlight."

So what must Arkansas do to be successful in its title defense?

Offensively, Beck and Thurman (and Al Dillard when called upon off the bench) must hit their outside shots, so teams can't double- and triple-team Williamson inside. Defensively, Richardson must be able to use his team's depth so the Hogs can turn up the full-court pressure, wear down teams without as much depth and unleash their transition game.

Oh, and one more thing, Richardson says: "We have to put our kids in the frame of mind that it's time to make your move. Get the confidence that you need to defend. Make your move. That's all we talk about."

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